

## WORD FROM WASHINGTON



### Surgeon General: We Can Halve Smoking Rates

(NAPSA)—Smoking rates among teens and adults could be cut in half within the decade if the United States would fully implement antismoking programs using proven approaches, according to Surgeon General David Satcher.



Satcher

Dr. Satcher offered this conclusion based on data published in his latest tobacco-related report to the nation, *Reducing Tobacco Use*. The report calls on all parts of society to redouble efforts to rid the country of its number-one preventable cause of death and disease: tobacco.

“Our lack of greater progress in tobacco control is more the result of failure to implement proven strategies than it is the lack of knowledge about what to do,” said Dr. Satcher.

As a result, more than 400,000 people continue to die every year from tobacco use—nearly one in every five deaths in America. Meanwhile, tobacco companies spend an estimated \$6.7 billion a year—more than \$18 million a day—to market cigarettes despite the harm they cause.

Between 1964, when the first Surgeon General’s report on tobacco use linked smoking and lung cancer, and 1998, smoking among American adults dropped from an estimated 42 percent to 24 percent. Still, nearly 50 million people continue to smoke, and the toll of tobacco use on the nation’s health care resources continues to climb: between \$50 billion and \$73 billion each year in direct medical costs.

Preventing the onset of smoking among youth is another major challenge. Today, an estimated 36 percent—more than double the “Healthy People 2010” goal of 16 percent—of high school students smoke cigarettes, and many people, including children, are still exposed to secondhand smoke.

“We need to act now to stem the tide of tobacco use here and around the globe,” said Satcher. “This new report is a science-based blueprint to help us achieve our goals.”

The Surgeon General outlined key actions needed to reduce tobacco use:

- Effective school-based programs in combination with media and community approaches can prevent or postpone smoking onset in 20 to 40 percent of adolescents. Unfortunately, fewer than five percent of U.S. schools are fully using the educational guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- Increasing the involvement of doctors, along with improving procedures in the medical system and insurance coverage of state-of-the-art treatment of nicotine addiction, can yield dramatic results. When doctors advise their patients to quit smoking, quitting rates can double or quadruple. A combination of behavioral counseling and use of nicotine replacement therapy and other treatments can boost success up to 10 times.

- Passing and enforcing strong clean-indoor-air regulations can protect the health of non-smokers and help to change social norms that contribute to tobacco use.

- Increasing tobacco prices by 10 percent would reduce overall cigarette consumption by an estimated three to five percent. “Healthy People 2010” calls for state and federal taxes to average \$2 for both cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products by 2010.

- Most importantly, statewide comprehensive approaches combining community involvement, mass media campaigns and program policy and regulation, can have dramatic effects in changing social norms and reducing tobacco use.

For more information about the Surgeon General’s report, *Reducing Tobacco Use*, visit CDC’s website at [www.cdc.gov/tobacco](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco) or call toll-free 1-800-CDC-1311.